

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Wednesday, July 5, 2006, 11:00 a.m., Rm. 113,
First Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street,
Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Gene Carroll, Jon Carlson, Dick Esseks, Roger Larson, Mary Strand and Lynn Sunderman. Michael Cornelius, Tommy Taylor and Gerry Krieser absent.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Marvin Krout, Kent Morgan, Steve Henrichsen, Mike DeKalb, David Cary, Sara Hartzell and Michele Abendroth of the Planning Department.

STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING: **Comp Plan Text Workshop**

The meeting was called to order at 11:05 a.m.

Henrichsen began by stating that today's meeting will focus on a review of two chapters of the Comprehensive Plan including the Economy chapter as well as the Business and Commerce chapter. He noted that the Industrial section of the Business and Commerce will be reviewed on August 2. He also briefly reviewed the upcoming schedule.

The Economy chapter includes significant changes from the previous text. Staff decided to delete much of the previous text and use text from the final report of the Economic Development Focus Group dated May 31, 2006.

In the first paragraph of the Economy chapter, Larson questioned if we should broaden the scope of the sentence to include new growth. Esseks suggested adding a sentence after the first sentence as follows, "In addition, attracting new investors should also be encouraged." Commissioners agreed with this recommendation.

Esseks asked about the recreational paragraph at the bottom of page one, as he would like to add a sentence after the first sentence regarding outdoor recreational opportunities. He suggested "Outdoor recreational opportunities should be maximized through public parks and trails." There was general consensus to make this change.

Larson stated that in terms of entertainment, he would like mention of the fact that the Arena Task Force has recommended an arena be pursued in downtown. Sunderman recommended the following sentence, "A guiding principle of the economy is a new downtown Arena and Convention Center." Strand expressed a concern with the arena as she feels it is important to keep up with the current infrastructure needs. Commissioners agreed to leave the text on the arena as written.

Esseks questioned the definition of the “primary employer”. He would like to see a statement regarding value added. Carroll stated that the Focus Group discussed this topic at great length and they decided on using the federal definition. Henrichsen noted that this definition is used in the impact fee ordinance as well.

Carlson stated that he likes the paragraph suggested for deletion on downtown being identified as a government, education, entertainment, convention and conference facility and asked about leaving it in the text. Henrichsen stated that the Business and Commerce chapter identifies downtown in that regard.

In terms of Strand’s concern with the potential future growth problems of the I-80 corridor in terms of Waverly, Carroll stated that he believes her concerns are addressed in the text as it states that the I-80 corridor is important and it capitalizes public infrastructure investment. Krout cautioned that we need to be careful in promoting the growth of the I-80 corridor. He believes that I-80 growth is important, and it needs to be well planned.

Esseks would like to add a sentence at the end of the Value Added Agriculture bullet, as follows “However, local and county government should explore other opportunities for siting them here.” Henrichsen agreed, but suggested the following addition, “Local and county government should encourage new locations in the county.” and deletion of “though these plants are primarily locating outside Lancaster County.” Commissioners generally agreed with this suggestion.

Henrichsen noted that the list of businesses on page 5 and 6 are the businesses identified by Angelou with the addition of the insurance and financial services.

Esseks suggested deleting the sentence on page 6, as follows, “Proximity to the interstate or highway is not important for most office users.” Commissioners agreed to this change.

Carlson suggested deleting the last sentence of the first paragraph on page 7 as follows, “When large office users are looking for sites, they will consider Downtown, but adequate parking is usually a stumbling block.” There was general agreement to make this change as well.

Henrichsen noted that the strategy on the Airpark Rail Center was added by staff and was not part of the discussions of the Focus Group.

Esseks suggested adding a definition of “new market tax credit” in the Strategies for Public Role in Economic Development. Henrichsen stated that staff will determine a definition.

Carlson suggested changing the bullet regarding Lincoln Electric System to the following, “Utilize LES technology infrastructure as an economic development tool.”

Carroll stated that the Focus Group discussed this topic at length, and they decided that they did not want the City competing unfairly. Commissioners agreed with this change.

Strand suggested that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln should also be a partner with LPED and the City. Henrichsen noted that a similar comment is made on page 7.

A short recess of approximately 10 minutes was taken at 12:00 p.m.

The Business and Commerce chapter was discussed next. Henrichsen stated that two additional Commerce Center types were added including Mixed Use Office Centers (O) and Highway Oriented Commercial (H). Currently, there are three centers including Regional, Community and Neighborhood, which are largely based on size. These designations are important for developers and transportation planning.

Strand expressed a concern with limiting the anchor stores to 60% of the total retail space. Esseks asked why staff chose 60% as the percentage. Henrichsen stated that ICSC (International Council of Shopping Centers) has suggested 40-50% for a neighborhood center and even larger than 60% for power centers. So they chose a middle ground. This is particularly important in a mixed use center with office space and some smaller stores. Esseks asked if the retail consultant, Gibbs, suggested anchor ratios or if any other communities use this percentage. He feels that this can limit new development. Carroll agrees with Esseks. Strand stated that she feels this can be a mistake to put this in the Comp Plan as Gibbs stated that stores are getting bigger, not smaller. She feels we can encourage this percentage, but not dictate it. Larson stated that the small businesses will want to locate around the anchor stores, and there should be space available for them. Carroll stated that he believes it should be controlled through design standards, not percentages.

Carlson suggested that the regional and community centers should not be limited by the ratio, but he feels that the neighborhood centers should be more restricted. Esseks cautioned against making a decision today without further study. Carroll commented that the SuperTarget being built at Pine Lake Heights is more than 60% of the available space and would not work under these rules. Henrichsen noted that most of the anchors in the neighborhood centers that we currently have are not over 60%. Nationwide, typically ISCS encourages 30-50% as the percentage for anchor space in neighborhood centers. Krout noted that Gibbs stated the second most reliable investment in commercial real estate is a neighborhood business center anchored by a grocery store. He believes there is a future for grocery stores.

Henrichsen noted that Gibbs stated the current trend in neighborhood centers is to have a larger store with several smaller ones. The 60% rule helps to achieve this. Krout stated that the purpose of the rule is not just to limit the big boxes but to make sure there is a mix of retail and to create a synergy within the center.

Esseks again urged the Commissioners to have staff provide more research on whether or not the 60% rule works before making a decision.

Strand suggested language to encourage multi-tenant centers, but not limit it to a percentage. Larson agreed with this suggestion.

Esseks suggested wording to indicate that neighborhood centers should include multi-tenant businesses with a mix of large and small retailers. Commissioners agreed with this suggestion. Staff will further develop language for future review by the Commissioners.

In the Mixed Use Office Centers, Henrichsen stated this category is mostly office areas and does not have an anchor tenant ratio.

Strand believes that the 10-20% range for retail uses is too strong, as we need to be flexible. She feels we could encourage the majority of the use be for office. Krout stated that we need to be careful with the use of the word 'encourage' in the Comp Plan as it leaves a lot of gray area. Esseks suggested using the words 'normally should be'.

Strand questioned the Location Criteria for Community Centers and the spacing between community centers and regional centers. Henrichsen explained that there needs to be appropriate spacing between these two centers in terms of traffic flow. Strand asked that this be discussed further at a future meeting.

Carlson suggested that a strategy be added in the Commerce Centers section as follows, "Commercial design standards should be developed to promote the goals and guiding principles of the Plan." He asked that this topic be included in discussions at a future meeting.

The meeting concluded at 12:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Abendroth
Planning Department